

Communist Party

Replies to

Labour Party Executive

On January 21st, the Communist Party wrote to the Labour Party Executive, applying for affiliation and asking that its application be placed before the Labour Party Conference at Whitsun. Since then, eight National bodies, including the Miners, Engineers and Electricians, besides over 1,100 Branch and District organisations, and 170 Trade Union Officials have signified their support for affiliation.

Now that there is every prospect of the affiliation of the Communist Party being carried by a majority vote at the Labour Party Conference, the Labour Party Executive has issued a statement attacking the Communist Party. The Communist Party's reply is given below.

THE statement issued by the Labour Party Executive, in connection with the Communist Party's application for affiliation, avoids the great issue of principle raised by the Communist Party—**THE UNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS.**

The experience of the working class has shown its weakness in the face of the enemy when its ranks are divided. That is why the oldest slogan of the movement is "Unity is Strength." This unity is no less essential when, as the statement observes, Labour has been elected to power with an overwhelming majority.

This electoral victory represented a triumph for the working class. The propaganda campaigns and activity of the Communist Party were vital factors in bringing about the defeat of the Tories, as hundreds of Labour candidates and agents will testify.

But the fight against Toryism has not ended with the General Election. The hardest tasks of the Labour Government now begin as vested interests and big business rally their strength to attack nationalisation, to hold up the great programme of social advance, to sabotage the fight for production, and to hold down wages and working-class standards.

The war has been won, but fascism and imperialism are not destroyed, peace is not yet secure. Churchill's notorious speech calling for an Anglo-American bloc against the Soviet Union, the campaign to misuse the United Nations for that purpose, the bolstering up of Franco Spain—all show the tremendous struggle that has yet to be waged to get peace, progress and better conditions of life, and to ensure the advance to Socialism. Success in this struggle depends on unity at home and friendship with socialist and progressive governments abroad.

Hundreds of thousands of the best of the Labour movement have realised this need for unity. Already 170 of the most influential leaders of the British Trade Union Movement have signed a statement supporting Communist affiliation. Who are these leaders? Men like Jack Tanner, Will Lawther, Arthur Horner and others—people with a lifetime of service in the movement, people who lead decisive sections of Labour's best supporters, the engineers, miners, railwaymen and others.

Instead of dealing with the need for unity and a sustained fight against the vested interests which stand in the way of Labour's programme, the statement issued by the Labour Party Executive produces a series of red herrings to divert attention from this central issue.

WHAT are the accusations levelled against the Communist Party?

1. That we are anti-democratic, that we are out for dictatorship.

The Communist Party fights for Socialism, which will

only be realised by the democratic will of the British people. In the constitution of the Party, we declare that we shall:—

"Work to preserve, develop and utilise to the fullest extent the democratic rights of public speech, press, assembly, organisation, representation in Parliament, Local Government and other public bodies, in order to advance the best interests of the people and secure a Government truly representative of the majority of the nation."

But if ever the capitalist class uses force against the democratic will of the people, the working class will use all the power at its disposal to defeat such an attack. The experience of the working class—for example in Spain—shows that this is necessary.

Who are undemocratic? *Not the Communists, but those sections of the Labour Party Executive who deny Communist Trade Unionists the same rights within the movement as other workers paying the Political Levy.*

The Labour Party Executive, while talking about "freedom of thought and conscience" in the movement has consistently taken action against the Left within the movement. Not only were Cripps and Pritt expelled, but even entire Labour Party organisations threatened and dealt with in this way.

By lopping off the Left, the Executive have sought to establish a dictatorship of the Right within the movement.

2. The Labour Party Executive's Statement repeats the Churchill charge that the Communist Party is the "tool of Moscow."

Such an assertion is baseless and cannot bear examination.

The Communist Party is composed of leading members of the British working class with a lifetime of struggle for the interests of the British workers, and a rank and file of which any party could be proud.

Our record is open to examination by all. It is one of ceaseless struggle for our people, whether it be in the days of the unemployed struggle, the fight on rent and wages, the glorious struggle in Spain, the battle against Mosley, or the fight for colonial freedom; we have struggled for the health, happiness and future of our people—for our industries and our agriculture. We always have fought, and always will, for the British people.

It is to be noted that the Labour Party Executive presents itself as always the best friend of Russia. Has it forgotten the official Labour Party publications dealing with Finland and the eager acceptance of every anti-Soviet slander by a section of the Labour leadership? We Communists are proud of the part we have played in combating anti-Soviet propaganda and in urging, in the best interests of Britain and the British Labour movement, the closest friendship with Socialist Russia. Like very many members of the Labour Party, we are [P.T.O.]

profoundly disturbed at tendencies in the Labour Party leadership leading to a hostile attitude to Russia; which we consider can result in serious danger to the interests of the British working class.

Our Party is proud of being internationalist in its outlook, because only such an outlook is in harmony with the real interests of the British working class.

We are doing what the Labour Party Executive ought to be doing—supporting the real struggle of the people against capitalism and imperialism, for example, in Greece, Spain and Indonesia.

It was because we stand four-square for the interests of the British people that the Communists were not afraid to speak out fearlessly against the imperialist and pro-fascist intrigues of the Munichites in the early stages of the war.

As for the mean, slanderous statement about sabotage of the war effort, not one iota of evidence is, or can be, advanced.

3. *The Labour Party Executive continues to repeat, without a shred of evidence, that the Communist Party is out to destroy the Labour movement from within and to work for the fall of the Labour Government.*

On the contrary, the Communist Party, along with other sections of the Labour movement, strives to rally a determined, united and active working class for the defeat of capitalism and the advance to Socialism.

Every proposal on policy, whether on foreign or home affairs, advanced by the Communist Party since Labour came to power, has been designed to strengthen the Labour movement and the Labour Government and speed the successful carrying through of its programme. Mr. Shinwell cannot accuse Arthur Horner or Abe Moffatt of disrupting Labour's plan for the mines; they have been his strongest supporters in rallying the miners for the fight. This is only one example of what the Communist Party is doing everywhere, particularly in the factories.

Our Party policy on wages, on food and agriculture, on the American Loan, on the transition from war to peace, on Greece, Spain, the Soviet Union and foreign affairs, if carried through, could enormously strengthen the position of the Government and speed its success.

It is claimed by the Labour Party Executive that we want the defeat of the Government to introduce our own "dictatorship." Such a fantastic charge will not bear a moment's examination. We want the success of the Government in order to defeat capitalism.

The danger is not the non-existent threat of a Communist dictatorship, but that the Government may succumb to capitalist pressure at home and, because of a wrong foreign policy, make Britain dependent on American imperialism abroad.

4. *A caricature of what would happen if the Communist Party was affiliated is then advanced by the Labour Party Executive.*

The answer to it is simple for every Labour Party member to test.

In every trade union where the membership have elected Communists to positions of trust and responsibility, trade union membership has increased, the organisation and authority of the union been strengthened and thousands of new members won to pay the Political Levy. The Communists have ceaselessly striven to bring the unions into closest working partnership with the Labour Government. It would be entirely the same in the Labour Party if the Communist Party was affiliated.

The Executive themselves do not believe their own scare stories of engineered quarrels, secret caucuses, etc. They know that the Communist Party would make its contribution not only in words but in deeds to unify and strengthen the movement locally and nationally and fight for the fulfilment of Labour's programme.

It is not the Communists, but a section of the Labour Party leadership, that seek to defy the democratic wishes of the membership of the Labour Party. It is they who have suggested that decisions in support of affiliation democratically arrived by affiliated unions should be ignored, and that a new artificial barrier to unity in the way of a constitutional amendment should be adopted.

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ALL these hysterical charges made against the Communist Party are only the cover for avoiding the real issue of the unity of the working class, the necessity for which is increasingly being understood by the membership of the Labour Party.

It is the knowledge that, on its merits, affiliation would be carried by the movement that has caused the Labour Party Executive to launch its campaign of fantastic charges and misrepresentation.

Now, when some of the most important Trade Unions in Britain are supporting affiliation, the Labour Party Executive seeks to maintain its threatened power by proposals to change the constitution of the Labour Party, established by the founders of the movement. In its attack on the Communist Party and in its reply to the I.L.P., the Labour Party Executive states that the Labour Party is no longer a federation and that socialist parties can no longer be affiliated.

For the Labour Party Executive to try suddenly to put through a change of rules to alter the traditional basis of the Labour Party, without any adequate exchange of opinion and discussion within the movement, is to do precisely what it falsely accuses the Communist Party of doing. Every trade union will see this as the thin end of the wedge directed not only against socialist parties, but to paving the way to a refusal to allow the trade unions their political rights within the movement.

From its earliest days, the Labour Party constitution has always depended on and allowed for affiliated socialist societies, which helped to develop socialist thought within the movement. The Independent Labour Party and the British Socialist Party were two such organisations in the past. Today with 3,000,000 members and Labour in power, the need for this socialist thought, propaganda and activity, is more vital than ever before.

It is this part which the Communist Party should be playing at present, if it were not excluded from the Labour Party by the policy of the Right, many of whom are afraid of Socialism. The Communist Party can fulfil this role precisely because it is a Socialist Party able to carry on concentrated propaganda and activity, animated by scientific principles of socialism, proved more correct with every passing day.

It is this activity which is the very backbone of the movement, and the idea that the Communist Party should dissolve is only put forward by those who are afraid of socialist thought within the movement.

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WE ask every member of the Labour Party and of its affiliated organisations to judge the Communist Party's application for affiliation, not on the basis of attacks that are only intended to confuse the movement, but in relation to the following questions, which put the substance of the issue:—

1. Is it not time to end the division in the working class?

2. Is it not time that Communist Party members, with records unsurpassed in the Trade Union Movement, should enjoy the same political rights as other members?

3. Is it not time that the energy and ability of the Communist Party, widely acknowledged throughout the movement, was allowed to make its organised contribution within the movement?

4. Is it not time to unite the whole working-class movement for the fight against Tory reaction, instead of campaigning against the Communist Party?